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Moments of Renewal – Alternative Ways of Viewing Indonesian Cinema

This paper aims to set out a number of considerations regarding the study of Indonesian cinema in the period since independence from the Dutch at the end of 1949. In particular it aims to suggest some frameworks beyond those that are found in most of the major books written on the topic, whether in English or in Indonesian. The aim is not to criticise work already done, so much as to suggest areas where work has not yet been done, and might valuably be undertaken. While clearly there are gaps in the writing about Indonesian cinema by Indonesians, there are many things that are understood about Indonesian cinema in Indonesia, perhaps even taken for granted, but not comprehended outside Indonesia.

With regard to the major books published in English about Indonesian cinema, both were written under quite particular constraints, though this is not always taken into consideration. Firstly the book by Karl Heider, *Indonesian Cinema: National Culture on Screen*, was researched not in Jakarta but in West Sumatra while Heider was working on an anthropological project of specific relevance to a village in West Sumatra and not to film (Heider, 1991). In the evenings Heider and his wife watched videos of Indonesian films he was able to hire from a local video store, and over time he came to see that there was material here for another anthropological study, one on aspects of the cultural differences he could detect in the Indonesian films that he watched. Although Heider did do some follow up research in Jakarta, it is clear that his book is not based on a comprehensive investigation that included paying attention to the numerous films regarded as innovative or important works in Indonesian cinema, some of which address in a quite conscious way the issues of cultural difference Heider explored in his examination of examples of Indonesian cinema available to him in West Sumatra. One director whose films are not discussed in Heider's book is Djayakusuma.

In the case of the book published by Krishna Sen in 1994, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* (Sen, 1994), this is based on research which explicitly set out to examine ways in which the ideologies, policies, ethos and sensitivities of the New Order government and its bureaucracies and its supporters had impacted on the film industry in Indonesia and on the kinds of films produced and the ways they were distributed or suppressed.

In her lengthy period of field work in Jakarta, Sen with great energy and perseverance explored the role of New Order institutions in regulating Indonesian cinema, and documented the changing series of regulations covering the industry, particularly in the New Order period. In this first book, Sen brought to light or kept in the public eye numerous cases of government interference and repression. Methodologies also deployed by Sen in this book and in other writings included both feminist theory and feminist film theory, particularly appropriate given the highly patriarchal ethos of New Order Indonesia, and 'Third Cinema' theory, which prioritises an agenda for social change and a critique of the dominance of Hollywood and of the imitation of Hollywood codes and values. In accordance with the aims of her research, the book mainly explored those films which exemplified government interference or conformity by filmmakers to the values, beliefs ethos and hypocrisy and paternalism of the New Order, of which there were quite a few examples. But it would not be fair, neither to Sen nor to Indonesian filmmakers, to see this book as a comprehensive account of film in the New Order period to the end of the 1980s, for the book does not address issues of aesthetics or aesthetic innovation, nor even many of the predominant popular genres, and it does not attempt to survey or give an account of what might constitute quality or creativity specific to Indonesian cinema. Indeed the book is more of an institutional history than a detailed study of particular films, though some films are discussed in detail; and in effect it is suggesting it may be impossible ever to give a full history of Indonesian cinema given the systematic destruction – after 30 September 1965 – of films made by communist directors in the 1950s and early 1960s.

I would like to suggest that the particular quality of *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* lies in the way it constitutes an alternative account of the situation within the film industry in Indonesia, to that offered by New Order critics and apologists, an alternative account that extends even to the 15 year period prior to the New Order, the Sukarno period. Sen devotes an early chapter of her book to this period,

but here her most extensive engagement with particular films or film texts, is her lengthy discussion of the lost films of the communist director, Bachtiar Siagian, whose films were lost (according to Misbach Yusa Biran, founding director of Sinematek Indonesia) during the turmoil of the aftermath of the 30 September 1965, possibly when Chinese owned warehouses containing these films were burned, or whose films were deliberately destroyed (Biran, 2001, p. 225). Sen conducts this discussion via an examination of surviving screenplays of a number of films about regional societies made by Bachtiar Siagian, screenplays Sen obtained from Siagian himself, who was imprisoned along with other left-wing artists, on the island of Buru until 1979. Sen favourably contrasts these films with other Indonesian films which survive and are regarded as historically important in Indonesia (such as the films about regional areas made by Djayakusuma in the 1950s) arguing that the films about traditional societies by Siagian engage in a critique of traditional cultural practices in these societies (Sen, 1994, p. 47). However Sen does not discuss in any detail the films made by Djayakusuma in the 1950s, films which still survive, and constitute a significant part of the history of Indonesian cinema in the early independence period.

There is a further question as to the extent of penetration of Indonesian New Order ideology and control into the Indonesian cinema. Certainly there was pre-censorship from the early 1970s on, as well as viewing by members of the Board of Film Censors after a film was completed. And of course there was plenty of encouragement to self censor, and to conceive of one's film in conservative ways. Major infringements – or what could be regarded as major infringements – by particular members of a very widely constituted censor board, representing a large variety of interest groups, many directly connected to the government and to state organisations of control, and to religious organisations, could involve expensive re-editing or even re-shooting. However, apart from a few propaganda films directed by Arifin C. Noer for Pusat Produksi Film Negara (State Film Production Centre), ideological control at least of cinema during the 1970s and 1980s (though not of television), and state intervention, were not as complete as, for example, in Soviet Russia, where the film industry was not only regulated by the state, but all films were produced by the state, and were intended to play some role in communicating the aims and beliefs of the government to its people. Nor has it been demonstrated that the degree of influence on film production, in terms of ideology and ethos, was as far reaching as that described in books on film in the Nazi period in Germany, such as

Julian Petley's *Capital and Culture: German Cinema 1933-45*. Although most films were not directly produced by the state in Nazi Germany, virtually all the main production companies in Germany were bought up by the Nazi government between 1937 and 1942. This never happened in Indonesia, though distribution came increasingly under the control of New Order conglomerates that had links to Suharto. To some extent some of the repression and self censorship in Indonesian cinema at this time may not be attributable simply to the New Order, but also to other kinds of conservatism that could be tapped or given encouragement in Indonesia (such as religious conservatism), though severely increased repression and an increasing influence of patriarchal ideologies were a feature of this period (Suryakusuma, 1996). One of the virtues of Sen's book, and of Sen's work in general, is that her views on the limitations of Indonesian film, and particularly on the limitations in the representation of women became sufficiently well known for some filmmakers to begin to take them into account even in the 1980s, and her work prepared the ground for the emergence of progressive women filmmakers in Indonesia in the late and post-Suharto periods. It is certainly useful to consider what productive new developments have occurred in Indonesian cinema since the fall of Suharto in terms of what is or can now be represented which could not be represented before, for example, films are now made about Chinese Indonesian communities (Sen 2006; Heryanto 2008). However it is questionable as to whether all films made in the New Order period automatically were imbued with or conformed entirely, represented or reinforced New Order ideology, even while they did not express the views of those who opposed the New Order. There are other ways of writing about them, other conceptual frameworks and perspectives from which they deserve attention, including where Indonesian cinema stands in the context of the historical evolution of cinema internationally.

Indonesia is a relatively unique society, and one may ask what kinds of films this nation of 13,000 islands has produced that are significantly different from the cinema produced in other nations. What kinds of films has Indonesia produced that are unique in world cinema, and which add to the dimensions of human experience? In some ways we need to ask this question before we answer the question that Heider raised: "What is Indonesian national cinema?" for this question assumes that all films are an expression of a unified view of 'the national'. Basically there are few really detailed studies of particular Indonesian films, so the question of dimensions of human experience and the ways

they are opened up by particular formal or narrative stratagems have been addressed by only a few writers and critics, one of them being myself (Hanan, 1993). So many questions remain and I will articulate a few of them here.

In the histories of Indonesian cinema, prominence is given to the films made from 1950 on by the Perfini company, under the leadership of producer-director, Usmar Ismail. The key directors here are Usmar Ismail himself, together with Djayakusuma, Asrul Sani and Nya Abbas Akup. It is the Perfini films that are most accessible to us today because they are probably the best preserved collection of films produced by a single company. This is partly because the company still survives in some form today, and because it has always cooperated with the founder of the film archive in Jakarta, Misbach Biran, a writer and director himself, who crewed on some of their early films. It is often suggested that the early films made by the Perfini group were influenced by the mode of production of Italian neo-realist films (use of non actors, minimal use of studios, location shooting). I would agree with this. Indeed this mode of production was forced on Indonesian filmmakers at the time, due to circumstances similar to those experienced by the Italians: for the time being war and revolution had dislocated any studio production that had existed before, which in the case of Indonesia was not much; funding was scarce and the new filmmakers, Indonesian *pribumi*, were without capital. However the influence of Italian neo-realism would have been in the mode of production, not via the direct influence of any particular Italian neo-realist film, for it is not recorded and it is highly unlikely that any of these Indonesian directors had seen a neo-realist film at the time they made the films which are now seen as similar to Italian neo-realist works. At best the reported success of the Italian films gave the Indonesians the confidence they could make films without studios and with non-actors or relatively inexperienced actors. The key films here are Usmar Ismail's *Darah dan Do'a* ("Blood and Prayer", aka "The Long March"), *Enam Djam di Jogja* ("6 Hours in Jogjakarta") and *Lewat Djam Malam* ("After the Curfew"). The first two films are about aspects of the war in the struggle for independence. Given that two of these films are about war or revolution and the third is about its aftermath, as members of the Indonesian army and the *pemuda* who fought for independence return to their homes, then one might well ask how these films are similar to and different from the films in Rossellini's 'War Trilogy'. Considered critical accounts of Italian neo-realism have read its politics as primarily a form of Italian populism, in Rossellini's case the

humanism of the films being a way of giving a new face to Italy after years of fascism, and the alliances between communist and catholic partisans (as is at the centre of *Rome Open City*), being a way of symbolising the emerging historic compromise (between communists and Christian democrats) which was to be the dominant political alliance in Italy in post-fascist years (Canella, 1974). Rossellini's films are also noted for the immediacy of their visual style, their frequent preoccupation with children, and their melodrama. We may ask in what ways can the early post independence Indonesian films about anti-colonial war and revolution be contrasted or compared specifically with their Italian forbears, in their politics, in their humanism, in their visual immediacy and their use of melodrama? An initial detailed analysis of one of these early Indonesian films has been made by Budi Irawanto, who examines the depiction of the military in Usmar Ismail's *Enam Djam Di Jogja* ('Six Hours in Jogja', 1951), comparing and contrasting it with the propaganda films about Suharto's role in the struggle for independence made later on, during the New Order period (Irawanto, 1999, p. 111-124). However we might note that Usmar's first major film, *Darah Dan Do'a* ('Blood and Prayer', aka 'The Long March', 1950) features an anti-hero who is a reluctant soldier, increasingly sceptical about the value of heroics, disturbed by the way the ethos of war gives advantage to opportunists amongst his comrades, and that the film repeatedly highlights moral compromises and betrayals, and that its battle scenes are contemplative and mournful rather than recreating a searing trauma (as is characteristic of the war-trilogy films of Rossellini), and that, like *Enam Djam di Jogja*, the film's interest is as much in the *pemuda* (idealistic young people who supported the Indonesian revolution) as it is in those who are at the beginning of military careers.

It might be noted that the success of the location films made by Perfini led the company to attempt a film in a regional area, *Harimau Tjampa*, directed by Djayakusuma in 1952, with much of it filmed on location in West Sumatra. *Harimau Tjampa* tells a story of a man seeking to avenge his father's death, by using the local West Sumatran martial arts form, *pencak silat*, but its narrative is largely taken up with the conflict between its protagonist whose aim is revenge, and the values of silat, intended primarily for self defence. In the film these values are related to Islamic values of restraint. But the film also displays and incorporates many other traditions of the region: in addition to silat, there is the background of the Minangkabau matrilineal village, Minangkabau music and performance traditions such as the *randai*

dance, performed by men, and various other local dances, and very notably the use of local *adat pantun* (proverbs from the oral culture) in conversation. Other regional films were to follow. For example in 1958 Djayakusuma made *Tjambuk Api* ("Whipfire", 1958) in which the protagonists duel using an East Javanese tradition of whip fighting. In 1955 Usmar Ismail directed *Tamu Agung* ("Exalted Guest"), a film satirising the cult of personality developing in Jakarta politics, via a story of the visit of a supposed Jakarta politician to a rural area. Set in a remote village near Ponorogo in East Java, and providing such scenes as a highly nuanced satire of a village council comprising traditionalists and modernists engaged in debate, and a performance of *reog Ponorogo* (elaborate tiger and peacock dance), put on by a village as a welcome for the visiting dignitary. This film was jointly scripted by the communist writer Basoeki Resobowo, and by Suryo Sumanto, a person known for his very wide experience and connections, who became the chairman of the actors association. Another important regional film was Nja Abbas Akup's *Tiga Buronan* ("3 Fugitives", 1957), about three fugitives evading the law, hiding in a village outside of Jakarta, which uses an old Jakarta performance tradition, *lenong Betawi*, as a point of reference in its mode of story telling, and combines this with the subtly ironic re-iteration of the performance codes of the Hollywood Western.

It might be suggested that these films, all of those mentioned being produced by Perfini, initiate a concern with peasant life and particular regions based not only on location shooting in poor rural areas, but on the utilisation of regional performance traditions as a key signifier of regional cultures, as though regional culture is performance as well as a tradition. One may ask is there such a concentration of regional films of a similar kind to be found in any 'national cinema' elsewhere globally, prior to what we find in Indonesia in the 1950s? This is a result of the special character of regionalism in Indonesia (a country the motto of which is 'Unity in Diversity'), and suggests a concern on the part of filmmakers as much with cultural diversity and multiculturalism, as it does with the founding of some sort of a national cinema.

It should be noted that while *Harimau Tjampa* is one of the first Indonesian films expressly concerned with regional society and its cultural traditions, as a film it exemplifies what in other contexts would be regarded as Brechtian elements. For example the division of the story into a number of acts, with divisions accompanied by titles, or by singing or music, is used by Brecht. The use of *pantun* in *Harimau Tjampa* involves a form

of quoting (different however from the actor quoting in Brecht), and in the film there is a reduced attention given to melodramatic action, with the attention paid to the philosophical elements. But rather than suggesting this film is influenced by Brecht, we need to remember that Brecht's modernist "epic theatre" re-invoked a number of aspects of older forms of narrative.

This concern with regional societies, and their traditions and histories, has continued as a minor but important aspect of Indonesian cinema, most recently and fully in the films of Garin Nugroho, many of whose films are filmed in regional areas (Yogyakarta and Solo but also Sumba, Aceh and Papua, and most recently, Bali). The tradition was continued after the 1950s by Alam Suryawijaya, Sjumandjaya and Sihombing in *Nji Ronggeng* (1969); by Teguh Karya in *November 1828* (largely shot in Central Java, outside of Yogyakarta); by Eros Djarot and Christine Hakim in *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*; by Sjumandjaya in his Betawi films; and to a lesser extent by Teguh Karya in both *Secangkir Kopi Pahit* ("Bitter Coffee", 1985) and *Ibunda* (1986), which are largely set in Jakarta but explore aspects of the relation between the centre and regions. Garin Nugroho's *Surat untuk Bidadari* ("Letter for an Angel", 1994), set on the island of Sumba in Eastern Indonesian, reinvigorates this tradition in new ways, exploring not only the region but the relation between the region and the centre. In his essay film, *My Family, My Films and My Nation*, made in late 1998, Nugroho speaks of the centralising tendencies of New Order Indonesia, and reiterates the importance of regionalism in his own work, and for Indonesian representation in the post-Suharto era:

Each time I make a film I force myself to make a film about yet another regional area in Indonesia because I fear, and all too often see, that the cultures of Indonesia continue to be built out of the culture of Java. The father and mother culture of Indonesia is the culture of Java, the culture of our former President, Suharto. For that reason I want to represent our society as multi-cultural. (Nugroho, 1998)

The issue of the abuse of multiculturalism within the framework of the national motto of 'Unity in Diversity' has been discussed at length by the filmmaker Aryo Danusiri in an essay in which he distinguishes between 'mythical and critical multiculturalism' (Danusiri, 2005).

Moments of Renewal

The period of the 1950s was clearly a period of relatively unique development in which Indonesian cinema made a contribution to world cinema, which has not yet been fully recognised. Since the 1950s there have been two periods where Indonesian cinema went into serious decline. One is in the middle 1960s, when political conflict and economic crisis led to a downturn in production. Another is the 1990s when a series of factors that included the introduction of commercial television and monopoly control of distribution and related structural consequences, led to a decline in the number of films produced and the closure of numerous venues. These periods of decline have in each case been followed by moments of renewal – firstly in the late 1960s and secondly in the early 2000s.

If we examine these moments of renewal after crisis, they reveal both innovation and idealism on the part of the filmmakers, innovation and idealism that is not always welcomed by the government and their bureaucracies. The early 70s are known as a years which saw the take off of a highly commercial cinema, with new production values provided by the introduction of wide screen and colour into an industry that hitherto had only produced films in black and white and standard screen format. It also saw the emergence of a new generation of filmmakers, seeking to make films of quality and social relevance, directors such as Sjumandjaya and Teguh Karya, often making highly personal projects that included political or cultural agendas, rather than simply following the dictates of the box office, even as they also attempted to survive as filmmakers within the commercial industry. But even before this we see in three film projects subsidised in 1969 by the Dewan Produksi Film Nasional (government funded National Film Council) a clear willingness on the part of filmmakers to do innovatory projects that bring something new into Indonesian cinema, or answer an imperative in the society whether it is of immediate commercial value or not. The three films are Nya Abbas Akup's *Matt Dower*, Alam Suryawijaya's *Nji Ronggeng*, and Asrul Sani's *Apa Yang Kau Cari Palupi?* A brief account of these projects is to be found in Salim Said's book on Indonesian cinema, and a fuller account of one of them, *Nji Ronggeng*, is to be found in an article by myself [Hanan, 1993]. In my view, one of these projects may have had good intentions of sorts, but was a mistake, Asrul Sani's *Apa Yang Kau Cari, Palupi?* This film appears to strive to produce in the context

of Indonesian wealthy classes, the equivalent of a European art film by Antonioni (such as, for example, Antonioni's *L'Avventura*), exploring a woman's love life and needs, but making use of *temps mort* (dead time) without too much reliance on plot. The film moves slowly, has lots of dead time providing one with plenty of space to observe, but there are no parameters of style to facilitate observation, perception or thought, such as the emphasis (we find in Antonioni) on body language as a means of communication, on how individuals communicate non-verbally and symbolically, and a sophisticated sense of the individual's relation to environment. Moreover the film works to subject its leading character, Palupi, more completely to patriarchal hegemony, whereas Antonioni exposes the inadequacy of the males around the woman, and the acceptance of this within Italian society. The inadequacies of this film from a feminist perspective have been explored by Krishna Sen (Sen, 1994, p. 141-2). Nevertheless the film was an attempt to do something new within Indonesian cinema, and Asrul Sani was to make a quite different film some years later, exploring a woman's attempt to escape patriarchy within a traditional society, with his film *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* ('Pioneers of Freedom', 1978-80) set in West Sumatra, an environment with which he was more familiar, and using a style that did not emulate European Art cinema.

What is interesting here are the two other films, *Nji Ronggeng* ("The Ronggeng Dancer", 1969), a regional film that explores the social position of women dancers in West Java, and a range of performance traditions in West Java, the other a political allegory about attempts to seize control of the state, *Matt Dower*, directed by Nja Abbas Akup who had directed the subtly original *Tiga Buronan* in 1957. *Nji Ronggeng*, shot in colour and widescreen, champions the cause of a woman who for reasons of family circumstances, works as a dancer, entertaining crowds and receiving money for dancing with paying male partners. There are some melodramatic excesses in the staging of aspects of the story in *Nji Ronggeng*, however the film's use of colour and cinemascope, its long scenes showing music, dance and performance traditions of the region of West Java around Sumedang, scenes which are dynamic yet realistic and frequently well integrated into the action (and use actual performers from the region) combine to make it a remarkably ambitious example of a regional film, still of great interest to anthropologists and ethnomusicologists. The other film, *Matt Dower* is something new in Indonesian cinema: a disguised rather than an overt political allegory, the overt political allegory being *Tamu Agung*, made

relatively early in the Sukarno period. *Tamu Agung* was not suppressed in Indonesia, indeed Sukarno even claimed to be flattered that it was made. The story is different with *Matt Dower*.

Matt Dower is largely set in a mythical Javanese court, with scenes shot in the old Water Palace in Yogyakarta, the central hero is a naïve character who sets out on a journey only to find a court taken over by a pretender. This early Indonesian colour film is really an allegory of the power struggle between Suharto and Sukarno that had dominated Indonesian politics in the previous four years. But the film does more than this, going so far as to allude to and ridicule measures being taken by the New Order government to incriminate and arrest relatives of communists, presumed guilty simply by association. Here the film refers (by citing a jargon term used by security organizations) to security provisions which infringe human rights, recently mobilised and deployed by the Suharto government during the period of the arrest and, in many cases, the killing of communists.

Despite the funding provided by the government to facilitate the film's production, *Matt Dower* was never given a proper release. According to the film's director, Nja Abbas Akup – with whom in 1989 I discussed the film and its limited circulation in Indonesia – rather than being banned, the film was released only in black and white, six months or so after it was completed, and at a time when audiences no longer wanted to see films in black and white (colour at that time was replacing black and white film, and seeing the new Indonesian colour films was part of the cinema-goers' expectation). The film died at the box office, its colour negative was lost and it survives today only as a single black and white print in the archives of Sinematek Indonesia. Shortly after these three films subsidised by the National Film Development Council were completed, this newly established production arm of the National Film Council was abolished.

In this case of the renewal of Indonesian cinema in the late 1960s and 1970s, we find the bureaucrats trying to find ways and means of thwarting the originality and freedom of thought of the filmmakers, rather than filmmakers conforming entirely to a repressive set of New Order orthodoxies. Further work needs to be done to see how filmmakers have attempted at different times to outflank both government and bureaucrats in an attempt to maintain some freedom of expression and independence. This applies to cultural politics as well as to the production of films, and is illustrated by the case of *Langitku Rumahku* ('My Sky, My Home', 1990)—the withdrawal of this film from exhibition in the Sinepleks 21

chain of cinemas, after only one day of screenings, led to lengthy court action initiated by the film's director, Slamet Rahardjo Djarot. Although inevitably he lost the case, the whole issue of the effective suppression of this film about class differences in Indonesia (which had passed the censor board for the censors could not find fault with it) had been kept in the public eye for two years or more. A less well known, if more minor case, is the refusal of the jury of film culture people (headed by well known director, Djayakusuma) to award a Best Film at the Indonesian Film Festival (FFI) held in 1984 in Yogyakarta, the year of the release of the *Penghianatan G30S PKI* ('The Treachery of the Indonesian Communist Party in the Movement of 30 September 1965'), a Suharto government funded film which dramatises the events of 30 September 1965 along the lines of the official New Order history, and demonises the communists, in effect justifying their murder. It had been assumed that this film would automatically receive the award for best film, as had a previous film by the same director, glorifying Suharto's role in events in the Indonesian revolution in the late 1940s, *Serangan Fajar* ('Dawn Attack', 1981). The Minister for Information had not been informed of this decision of the jury for the 1984 FFI appointed by his own Department, and on national television opened the envelope containing the name of the winning film, to find, after building up to the announcement of the best film, that what was written there on the piece of paper in the envelope he had just opened, was "Tidak Ada" (There isn't one). According to one jury member, an angry and humiliated Minister of Information assembled his jury back at their hotel late that same night, and lectured them for half an hour. The current controversy over censorship and film regulation, initiated by the younger generation of filmmakers united within the organisation 'Masyarakat Film Indonesia', is an example of debates and controversies that at the best of times, circulate in the Indonesian film world. Here the important issue is the request for the repeal of the film law of 1992. In the late 1970s the Suharto government strengthened the means of censoring Indonesian films, and a new film law, legislated in 1992, when President Suharto was at the height of his power, consolidated the changes that had been made over the previous twenty years. Supporters of the government have argued the need for these laws to remain in place, in order to ensure continuing stability of the state. But those in Masyarakat Film Indonesia argue that precisely because the law was legislated during the height of the Suharto era, it should have been changed quickly after Suharto's fall from power, for it took the form it did in order to strengthen the position of the army in

Indonesia, and, since its provisions were still there in 2008, it can still be deployed arbitrarily (Masyarakat Film Indonesia, 2008).

It remains within the length of this paper to briefly suggest some other areas of work. It does not aim to be comprehensive, and I would expect others could be suggested. While a book of essays on Garin Nugroho has been published in both English language and Indonesian language editions, no comprehensive or detailed study has appeared in English of the key films by Sjumandjaya and Teguh Karya, though there was a collection of commemorative tributes published for Teguh Karya by the Teater Populer group (Riantiarno, 1993). Nor has there ever been undertaken a detailed study of the Perfini films. What is needed here is detailed analysis of these films.

As a teacher and entrepreneur, Teguh Karya is renowned for training and developing through his workshop, Sanggar Teater Populer, some of the most creative people in film culture in Indonesia in the period of the 1970s and 1980s. As a director he is regarded by some as the most formally innovative of directors ever to work in cinema in Indonesia, prior to Garin Nugroho. I would agree with this particularly with regard to his films, *November 1828*, *Secangkir Kopi Pahit* and *Ibunda*. Apart from its brilliant deployment of some central and East Javanese performance traditions as elements of its plot, *November 1828* is interesting for its innovative use of contrasting kinds of body language, and its de-centering of any single hero, so that the people as a whole become the hero of this historical film about resistance to Dutch colonisation. *Ibunda* in contrast is a small scale domestic drama that raises the issue of racism by Jakartans towards other citizens of their nation, the West Papuans, particularly those residing in Jakarta, with whom they come in contact. Integrated into this story are scenes from a play in which one of the film's characters is acting, a kind of expressionist folk opera that draws attention to political mass murder both as an international and a domestic phenomena. In this film allegory and subtly ambiguous imagery are used at key moments to suggest the restricted and controlled lives of Jakartans in New Order Indonesia. Finally *Bitter Coffee*, about migration to the capital by people from regional areas, is a film that has a remarkable and original flashback structure, which sets in motion an investigation that is kaleidoscopic in what it covers. The film is set in both Jakarta and, more briefly, in North Sumatra, and many of its numerous main characters are people who have migrated at different times to Jakarta from regional areas: from West and North Sumatra, from Manado in North Sulawesi, and from East Java. In this film Indonesia

is imagined not through the domestic certainties of middle class Indonesians, but as a stressful Third World society with relatively isolated people travelling in difficult trajectories of space and time initiated by hopes and needs rarely fulfilled. This is a dynamic film about the experience of living in a complex third world society. It not only shows how, through pervasive economic inequities, wealth and opportunities are mainly found in the difficult environment of an overcrowded capital city, while regional populations have little confidence in their own regions, but dramatises how individuals live on a day to day basis in this urban environment, while imagining their roots and real selves are elsewhere.

Even in the early 1970s Sjumandjaya made a film that was critical of corruption (*Si Mamad*, 1973) and throughout his career he continued to make works that questioned Indonesian society during the New Order, for example in *Yang Bermuda*, *Yang Cinta* (1977), *Budak Nafsu* (1983) and *Kerikil Kerikil Tajam* (1984). But an area of great importance in Sjumandjaya's career was his creation in a series of films of the character of the Betawi child hero, in *Si Doel Anak Betawi*, based on a famous Indonesian short novel. This film almost single-handedly created a dimension in cinema of Betawi popular culture, that Sjuman developed to further effect in two subsequent films, *Si Doel Anak Modern* (1976) and *Pinangan* ("The Proposal", 1975), both starring Benyamin S. The first film was a tribute to the children of Jakarta, their resilience and good nature in the face of poverty and adversity. The second was a film that took the traditional Betawi hero but developed him into a new character and used him to focus on the issue of social and cultural change during the period of economic expansion through foreign investment in Jakarta in the 1970s. The *Si Doel* character became so well known, he became the central focus of the most popular television series of the 1990s, *Si Doel Anak Sekolah*.

Perhaps the single most important figure in film culture in Indonesia relatively unknown outside of Indonesia and Malaysia is the Betawi singer and film comedian, Benyamin S (1939-1995), who celebrated in his songs and films the lives of the Betawi poor, the Betawi being the ethnic group widely referred to as original inhabitants of Jakarta. The songs and films of Benyamin S are a moment of great vitality in Indonesian popular culture. Benyamin worked with Sjumandjaya in all three of his Betawi films, but he himself starred in some 54 films, 47 of them made between 1970 and 1978, many of them set in a Betawi milieu. Given their budgets and production qualities, and their audiences, they would be regarded as B movies, but most of them are very funny and of great sociological

interest. Benyamin S came to public attention in the late 1960s with his adaptation of the traditional Betawi musical idiom, *Gambang Kromong*, into what became known as *Gambang Modern*, which included a distinctive group of songs describing and celebrating Betawi culture and lifestyle, and the daily lives of Betawi. With his increasing popularity as a singer, and his gift for on-stage humour, Ben in the early seventies was invited to appear in films, and quickly established himself as a star. At the time of Ben's death in 1995 there was much comment, in the press and in the seminars that followed, on his contribution to the reinvigoration – through his art – of Betawi culture. The weekly magazine, *Gatra*, in its introduction to its lengthy report on Benyamin's death, argued that Betawi culture was important to Indonesia because it, the culture, was democratic, though increasingly marginalized by the growth of modern Jakarta: 'Bang Ben telah berjasa mengangkat budaya Betawi yang egaliter ke tingkat nasional' ('Bang Ben did us the service of lifting Betawi culture, which is egalitarian, into a national focus'). One author, Fachry Ali, paying tribute to Benyamin, argued that Betawi culture was not a complete culture, but a partially realized culture, without ever having had any centre of power or tradition of court arts, yet made up of incomplete elements or principles from a range of other more complete cultures ('unsur Arab yang bukan Arab, unsur Sunda yang bukan Sunda, unsur Cina, yang bukan Cina, unsur Jawa yang bukan Jawa, serta unsur Barat yang bukan Barat') As a result, Ali argues, this was a culture that was always in a state of dynamic striving. To know and comprehend the songs and films of Benyamin S is to begin to know a lot about Jakarta and its millions of poor: their earthiness, camaraderie and humour, things that Sjumandjaya recognised and celebrated. His films and songs engaged with cultural elements that are being lost with modernisation, and in my view they are of international significance.

I have recently completed a lengthy article on Benyamin S (written jointly with Basoeki Koesasi). This article explores the reasons for the popularity of Benyamin S, and his significance within Indonesian popular culture, by examining a selection of his songs and films, and by exploring through them a number of related issues. These issues include his representation of Betawi communities in both the songs and the films of the 1970s; his creative use of *bahasa Betawi* as a medium of humour and as a language most expressive of community, particularly of communities of the Betawi poor; his adaptation of a traditional Betawi musical form, *Gambang Kromong*, into a modernized form, *Gambang Modern* (which included some remarkable duet singing) together with

his mixing of a range of Western styles of popular music into his songs, even when based on traditional Betawi forms; and his related ironic engagement with the icons of Western popular culture, occasionally in his songs, but most frequently in his films, which, it is argued, create an Indonesian perspective on Western popular culture. Also important, we argue, is the implicit critique, in some Benyamin S films, of social changes that were occurring at the time of rapid economic development in Jakarta and its environs under Suharto's New Order in the 1970s.

In my conclusion to this article I develop a set of arguments about three movements in Indonesian cinema in the 1970s and 1980s: the songs and films of the Betawi comedian and singer Benyamin S, the songs and films of the Dangdut singer, Rhoma Irama, and the films of Teguh Karya and his group Sanggar Teater Populer. Here I argue that despite appealing to initially different audiences, and intersecting with the nation in different ways, all three artists and their associates played an important role in the cultural development of this increasingly complex society in the 1970s and the 1990s, and familiarity with the work of each of them increases one's sense of richness, complexity and problems in this society.

Each moment of renewal in Indonesian cinema has involved engagement with a new set of issues and circumstances. As we have seen, the first moment involved a number of initiatives. Firstly filmmakers liberated from the shackles of colonialism, set about making films about the recent past, the war of struggle for independence and to represent life in the recently liberated but relatively impoverished society. There were a range of different perspectives in this early period, including films made by left wing filmmakers, only a few surviving and in poor condition. But the second major initiative which stands out in terms of the quality of the surviving films and their innovative character, even in an international context, is the attempt to make regional films by integrating performance elements from the regional cultures. In the second moment of renewal, early in the New Order, we find filmmakers engaging with a new set of issues. I have shown how very early on it was recognised as necessary to make disguised if not overt political allegory, in *Matt Dower*, a tradition followed later in Slamet Rahardjo's *Langitku Rumahku*, in Garin Nugroho's *Surat Untuk Bidadari*, and in the recently completed and released *Kantata Takwa* directed by Gotot Prakosa and Eros Djarot in the early 1990s, but not released at the time. But rather than the teen romances and the horror films in colour which began to proliferate in the early 1970s, it is the films that celebrate the popular culture of the Betawi that mark a distinctively Indonesian and Jakartan development. The early

seventies also saw the development of a film school, in the newly established Jakarta Institute of the Arts, funded initially by the Jakarta City Council, with most of the teachers there being practitioners. This development led to new experimental work by students and teachers, and new kinds of collaboration between film and the other arts. From the late 70s on we see the emergence of more ambitious but sophisticated historical films, such as Teguh Karya's *November 1828*, Asrul Sani's *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* and Eros Djarot and Christine Hakim's *Tjoet Nja' Dhien*, some literary adaptations, and increasingly experimental use of narrative and form in films by Teguh Karya (followed in the 1990s by Garin Nugroho). But this period also eventually saw the New Order Government funding propaganda films illustrating the government's point of view on key moments in history, including the president's role in it (a propaganda genre developed most fully in the Stalinist years of the Soviet Union) and it is reported that even *Tjoet Nja' Dhien* was made because Eros Djarot was not able to make a film about contemporary Indonesia which really depicted what he thought. After the suppression of *Langitku Rumahku* in late 1990, the only director who continued to make statements in his films during the New Order was Garin Nugroho, but his films were rarely released commercially and often worked through allegory and sindiran until the end of the New Order period.

In this latest period of renewal, the post-Suharto period, and particularly since around 2000, we can see a new set of aesthetic movements emerging. In addition to the spectacularly popular horror films, and youth romances, which have been a major part of Indonesian cinema since at least the early 1970s, we now find at least six major new trends. Firstly there is a small number of political films that address issues suppressed during the New Order. Examples are Aryo Danusiri's *The Village Goat Takes the Beating* (1999), an audacious documentary about human rights abuses by the Indonesian army in the DOM period in Aceh in the 1990s, and Garin Nugroho's feature, *Puisi Tak Terkuburkan* ('Poetry Cannot be Buried', released in 2000, its English title simply *The Poet*), the first feature film to address the issue of the massacre of hundred of thousands of communists by the Army under Suharto in the months after the abortive coup of the night of 30 September 1965 (Rutherford, 2006). There is now an increasing number of documentaries and video works in which Indonesians have begun to address this issue, beginning with Lexy Rambadeta's *Mass Grave* (2002). Nugroho has also raised the issue of the plight of the West Papuans, both in his essay

film about the West Papua Congress of May-June 2000, *Aikon: Sebuah Peta Budaya* ('Icon: A Cultural Map', 2002) and in his feature, *Bird-Man Tale* (2003), that deals with the increasingly overt repression that followed the 2000 West Papuan Congress, a congress unique in the openness with which Papuans expressed themselves, and the desire of many of them for independence. Secondly there are the films dealing with women's issues and gender issues, being made by Nia Dinata and her associates, and by Nan Achnas and others, notably Dinata's *Arisan* (2003) and *Berbagi Suami* ('Sharing Husbands', 2006) and Achnas' earlier *Pasir Berbisik* ('Whispering Sands', 2000), set in a desperately poor village and dealing with a deserted mother's relation to her teenage daughter, and the exploitation of the daughter by the returned father. Third is a small number of films, features and documentaries about Chinese Indonesians, commencing with Nia Dinata's *Ca Bau Kan* (2002). Fourthly there is the interest in creating a progressive popular cinema, by reworking in thoughtful and provocative ways a number of popular genres: teen movies, musical films and road movies. This we find most clearly as a discernible agenda in the films developed by Mira Lesmana and Riri Riza at Miles Productions, whose group also made the historical film *Gie* (2005), another feature set early in the New Order period. Fifthly there is the large movement of short filmmakers operating out of universities and cine clubs, whose work is increasingly highlighted in the numerous film festivals and film workshops that have sprung up in Indonesia. And finally, there is the gradual emergence of a documentary movement of a kind that was impossible during the Suharto regime. We see this at its most innovative and pro-active in the films of Aryo Danusiri, four of which are about Aceh and one of which is about West Papua. Danusiri's *Lukas Moment* (2005), set around the town of Merauke in West Papua, is a film about the efforts of a young West Papuan and his fellow students to form a co-operative and engage in prawn fishing and marketing in a way competes with the Indonesian transmigrants from South Sulawesi who control the prawn trade in much of West Papua. This is the first Indonesian observational documentary ever to be made, and it avoids a voice-over and uses many long takes, in order to give access to the voices, feelings and activities of these young West Papuans, in as unmediated a way as possible. Trained as an anthropologist, Danusiri has now produced a substantial body of innovative work that is both culturally sensitive and pioneers not only new modes for documentary in Indonesia, but introduces a kind of current affairs timeliness, relevance

and immediacy, even though the issues Danusiri deals with are not generally addressed on Indonesian television.

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